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WILDLIFE SERVICES—PENNSYLVANIA

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Pennsylvania

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Pennsylvania Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS protects Pennsylvania's citizens from human health and safety problems associated with wildlife at airports, military installations, industries, and around homes, schools and workplaces. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. WS assists the Pennsylvania agricultural community in reducing crop losses and damage from Canada

geese, European starlings, vultures and coyotes.

Through partnerships with other natural resource management agencies, WS biologists protect threatened and endangered species and habitat by reducing the negative impacts from more abundant wildlife species. WS staff also conducts sampling and monitoring for disease threats such as West Nile virus, rabies and avian influenza.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology. The WS program in Pennsylvania, in conjunction with WS' National Research Center (NWRC), has been involved with bird predation and damage prevention studies at aquaculture facilities, testing lasers to aid in bird dispersal, and a variety of disease issues including research on wildlife transmission of Avian Influenza and West Nile virus.

Aquaculture Assistance—Estimated costs associated with bird damage and damage prevention for the aquaculture industry nationally exceed \$17 million annually. WS conducts research to determine the problem's magnitude and to develop methods to reduce damage by fish-eating birds to aquaculture facilities. The research provides additional strategies for managing great blue herons and other fish-eating birds at aquaculture facilities in Pennsylvania.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports

Since 1995, aircraft/wildlife strikes have contributed to the loss of more than 115 human lives. Public safety threats from wildlife strikes are increasing, with the cost to U.S. civil aviation



estimated at more than \$550 million annually. Pennsylvania's airports serve millions of passengers each year, and are situated in the Atlantic Flyway, the north-south migration corridor for birds. Airports, travelers, and many agencies are keenly interested in managing wildlife strikes. NWRC conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop effective management tools to reduce these hazards, and monitor the effectiveness of hazard control programs. In Pennsylvania, WS biologist and technicians provide expert management recommendations to airports to reduce or eliminate wildlife hazards. They also assist with wildlife permitting processes, provide wildlife hazard management training, and conduct direct assistance to reduce hazards.

WS' wildlife biologist at the Philadelphia International Airport works closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the City of Philadelphia to monitor and reduce hazards through habitat management, behavior modification, and other methods. Currently, WS staff is working cooperatively with nearly 30 additional airports to assess wildlife hazards, develop site-specific wildlife hazard management programs, and provide operational support to implement the plans.

Reducing the Occurrence of Rabies—Rabies pose a serious threat to livestock, wildlife, pets, and public health. Raccoon rabies, first detected in Pennsylvania in 1982, has spread throughout the State and into adjacent States. Currently, nearly all of the terrestrial rabies cases in the State are

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Protecting habitat, property, and human health and safety from over abundant deer populations
- Managing damage caused by Canada geese, vultures, coyotes, gulls, swallows, and European starlings
- Protecting aquaculture from bird depredation

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Pennsylvania:

- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture
- Evaluating wildlife disease issues impacting human or livestock health
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

of the raccoon-rabies variant. Although human deaths are rare, the estimated public health costs associated with the disease detection, prevention, and control have risen, nationally exceeding \$300 million annually.

In 2001, WS cooperated with Federal, State, and local agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier along Lake Erie and Ohio. This barrier connects with the earlier-established Ohio oral rabies vaccination barrier. The current barrier now encompasses the entire area approximately 50 miles east of the Ohio border. Oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits distributed throughout the targeted area vaccinate raccoons against rabies, thus preventing its spread. The continued distribution of ORV will not only reduce the incidence of rabies, but ultimately could eliminate raccoon rabies in Pennsylvania and the entire eastern United States.

Protecting Property—WS receives more requests related to Canada geese problems and damage than to any other animal. Pennsylvania is home to approximately 300,000 resident Canada geese, one of the highest populations in the entire Atlantic Flyway. Concerns include the accumulation of droppings, feces-contaminated water, and aggressive geese that bite children and the elderly. The majority of geese live in urban and suburban areas benefiting from nutritious lawns, ample water, and few predators. Each year, WS assist hundreds of State residents with goose-related problems by providing technical advice, group presentations, and assistance with permit processes.

In addition to technical assistance and educational programs, WS provides direct assistance for geese that cause property damage, harm water quality, and threaten public health. WS removes approximately 2,000 resident Canada geese from airports, parks, military installations, businesses, retirement communities, medical centers, and residential areas each year. The captured geese are donated to feed economically disadvantaged people. Problems caused by expanding goose popu-

lations have led researchers and others to consider population management as a means to minimize human/goose conflicts. WS strives to create community programs and innovative solutions that balance the needs of people and geese.

Protecting Multiple Resources—A State population of more than 1 million white-tailed deer presents a wildlife management challenge. Loss of wildlife habitat and the adaptability of deer to the urban environment create an ever-increasing demand for the resolution of human-deer conflicts. Deer combined with urban traffic typically result in hazardous situations for both deer and drivers. Deer host ticks that carry Lyme disease, which can spread to humans. In addition to increased disease threats, vehicle collisions, and other property damage, deer also destroy habitat in city parks and natural areas. WS has been involved in resolving many deer-related issues in areas of the State where sport hunting is no longer a fully effective or viable option. These areas include airports, agricultural research facilities, city parks, neighborhoods, military installations, National Parks, and public and private recreational areas.

Looking to the Future

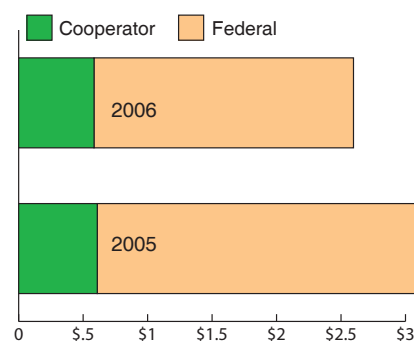
WS provides the people of Pennsylvania with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a diverse and growing range of wildlife conflicts, but challenges remain. Growing populations of urban deer, resident Canada geese, and other wildlife are creating an increased risk to aviation safety. With limited funding, regional and local airports often do not have the resources to address significant wildlife risks to aviation safety. Likewise, funding wildlife damage management services to low- and middle-income people presents a challenge to WS, which requires cooperator funding for operational work. Wildlife damage management is complex and can be expensive

due to State and Federal laws and regulations. WS is also concerned with protecting Pennsylvania's rare natural resources: limited State and Federal funds exist to protect threaten and endangered species from predatory and damaging wildlife. Public health concerns, such as rabies and West Nile virus, will continue to challenge WS staff and resources in Pennsylvania.

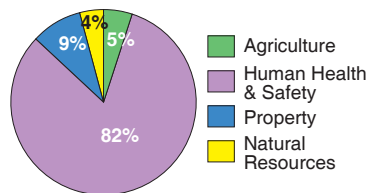
Pennsylvania Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



Major Cooperators

- Federal Aviation Administration
- Bucks County Department of Parks and Recreation
- Pennsylvania Air National Guard Bureau
- Penn State University
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Cities of Philadelphia and of Allentown
- Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and of Health
- National Park Service

NWRC Field Station in Pennsylvania

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This unique multidisciplinary research center, affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, provides access to specialized research opportunities focused on the development of species-selective non-lethal repellents and attractants. Chemical senses research (olfaction, taste, trigeminal chemoreception) is emphasized. The station's research has led to discovery and development of a bird repellent, both solid and liquid attractants for deer, visual repellents for deer and a variety of biologically based repellents and attractants for rodents.

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